United Nations E/CN.17/2001/17

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 March 2001

Original: English

Commission on Sustainable Development
Ninth session
16-27 April 2001
Agenda items 6 and 7

Cross-sectoral themes:

Information for decision-making and participation

International cooperation for an enabling environment

Report of the Ad Hoc Inter-sessional Working Group on Information for Decision-making and Participation and on International Cooperation for an Enabling Environment

New York, 12-16 March 2001

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I. Matters calling for action by the Commission on Sustainable Development or brought to its attention

A. Information for decision-making and participation

1. Possible elements for a draft decision by the Commission

1. The Working Group submits to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its ninth session possible elements for a draft decision on information for decision-making and participation, as set out below.

Possible elements for a draft decision on information for decision-making and participation

General considerations

1. The availability and uses of information are issues that cut across all chapters of Agenda 21 and its implementation. Countries in all regions of the world have made substantial efforts to improve the quality, coherence and cost-effectiveness of data and information gathering in the years since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Access to information and public participation are crucial elements for ensuring sound decision-making for sustainable development. In this context, it is essential to increase investment in human beings, recognize the value of diverse views and appreciate the power of stakeholder participation if countries wish to take advantage of the opportunities that the new knowledge economy presents. However, there remain significant gaps in the availability and uses of information in many countries. Those developing countries suffering from inadequate infrastructure and information systems and those parts of the population too poor to tap into new information sources are being left behind. Developing countries, in particular, need technology transfer, capacity-building and new and additional financial resources to modernize or establish their information systems.

Guidance to the multilateral system

2. Recognizing that enhancing information for decision-making in order to achieve sustainable development will require international cooperation and actions compatible with national priorities and circumstances, and seeking to provide assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to achieve sustainable development, the Commission on Sustainable Development could:

Improvements in functioning, coherence and coordination

(a) Encourage international organizations, including international convention secretariats, to rationalize their requests for information with respect to voluntary national reports so as to avoid duplication and unnecessary burden on countries particularly developing countries. The international organizations should clearly specify the purpose of the data

request and there should be a demand-driven shift from available information to needed information;

(b) Strengthen the access by developing countries to information on sustainable development and take measures to ensure that the commercialization of information does not become a barrier to developing countries in this regard;

(c) Encourage the adoption of accessibility guidelines for Internet information;

(d) Strengthen cooperation and coordination of global observations systems and research programmes, taking into account the need for sharing, among all countries, of valuable data, such as satellite remote sensing data and ground-based observation data, and the effective integration of information systems on a global scale;

(e) Encourage countries and relevant international organizations to develop information systems, which make possible the sharing of valuable data obtained by remote sensing;

(f) Promote the development of innovative technologies, such as global mapping, geographical information systems, video transmission technology and Internet technology for satellite data;

Training and capacity-building

(g) Encourage countries, particularly developed countries, to:

(i) Undertake training and capacity-building, particularly in developing countries, with the cooperation of relevant international organizations, which will help promote wide use of information and communication technologies, including satellite data;

(ii) Assist Governments of developing countries to develop the needed technological infrastructure for sustainable development through, inter alia, transfer of technology, including transfer of necessary hardware and software, and implementation of capacity-building programmes to this effect;

(iii) Assist in strengthening national information systems and statistical agencies to ensure that efforts in data collection and analysis are efficient and effective and able to meet a range of decision-making requirements.

Indicators of sustainable development

3. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Emphasize that the indicators used by the United Nations Secretariat in the context of the coordinated and integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits should be developed with the full participation of all countries and approved by the relevant intergovernmental bodies;

(b) Reiterate the need for the Commission to keep under review the full range of indicators used in its reports and information networks, with full

participation and ownership of Member States, with a view to avoiding duplication, as well as ensuring the transparency, consistency and reliability of these indicators, taking into account that such indicators should be of a voluntary nature, should be suited to country-specific conditions and should not lead to conditionalities;

(c) Recognize that the Economic and Social Council has invited the Statistical Commission to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of the indicators used by the United Nations system for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels, and for the review of the methodologies employed in formulating them, including in the context of the elaboration of the common country assessment, and to make recommendations with a view to facilitating future consideration by the Council;

(d) Note the important role that testing countries played in pilot testing in the work programme of the Commission on indicators of sustainable development, and in this context, while noting the usefulness of the above-mentioned exercise, request that further work on these and other indicators be undertaken in accordance with Council resolution 2000/27;

(e) Encourage the development of indicators of sustainable development in line with national conditions and priorities for defining and implementing national sustainable development goals, and encourage the involvement of all national stakeholders, as appropriate;

(f) Urge developed countries and international organizations to assist developing countries, as appropriate, in establishing the basic statistical and data capacities for the development of national indicators of sustainable development, through, inter alia, financial support, capacity-building, technical assistance and twinning arrangements.

Recommendations for activities at the national level

4. At the national level, Governments, taking into account their priorities and respective national circumstances, are encouraged, to the extent possible, to:

(a) Collect and provide access to relevant information for decision-making for sustainable development, including gender-disaggregated data, incorporating indigenous and traditional knowledge into information bases for decision-making, as appropriate;

(b) Assist countries, particularly developing countries, in their national efforts to achieve high-quality environment data, use satellite and remote sensing technologies for data collection and further improve ground-based observations;

(c) Establish policy guidelines to help distinguish between specialized information that can be effectively commercialized from information that should be freely available to the public;

(d) Develop strategies to improve access by all segments of society to information and communication technologies, including the Internet, to increase public awareness about sustainable development;

(e) Incorporate sustainable development performance information produced by major groups, including the private sector, in relevant decision-making processes;

(f) Promote, with private sector participation, measures to give developing countries access to information essential for sustainable development, and encourage a more effective role for the media in support of sustainable development;

(g) Foster sustainable development in cooperation with international organizations by providing needed technological infrastructure to developing countries and implementing capacity-building programmes that reach out to all sectors of society;

(h) Develop strategic partnerships with non-governmental organizations and the private sector to stimulate innovative data-generation and collection methods;

(i) Encourage the application of traditional and community knowledge to sustainable resource and community management.

Statement by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the G-77 and China

5. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran made the following statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China:

> "The Group of 77 and China does not consider the text contained in paragraph 3 (a) to (f) above on indicators of sustainable development to be a basis for negotiations at the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development."

Statement by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union

6. The representative of Sweden made the following statement on behalf of the European Union:

> "The European Union (EU) appreciated the opportunity for informal discussions undertaken at the Co-Chairs' request. In presenting these elements for a draft decision, the Co-Chairs have drawn their own conclusions from the informal discussions.
>
> "The text will be studied by the EU and we will provide additional comments to the Commission at its ninth session. It is of course clear that all parts of the draft elements have the same status as the negotiations start."

2. Co-Chairpersons' summary of the discussion

Introduction

2. As part of the multi-year programme of work approved by the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session, in 1997, the Ad Hoc Inter-sessional Working Group on Information for Decision-Making and Participation and on International Cooperation for an Enabling Environment, which met in New York

from 12 to 16 March 2001, reviewed progress achieved in the implementation of the objectives of chapter 40 of Agenda 21 concerning information for decision-making and participation. The Working Group's mandate was to provide possible elements for a draft decision for consideration by the Commission at its ninth session.

3. In support of the meeting of the Working Group and the ninth session of the Commission, an international expert meeting on information for decision-making and participation was held in Alymer, Quebec, from 25 to 28 September 2000. The report of the meeting was made available as a background paper at the meeting of the Working Group. The representative of Canada briefed the Working Group on the results of the Alymer meeting.

4. The discussion on information for decision-making was based on the report of the Secretary-General on information for decision-making and participation (E/CN.17/2001/4 and Add.1). Two additional background papers on the aggregation of indicators of sustainable development and on indicators of sustainable development were made available at the meeting of the Working Group.

5. The Division for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat introduced the report of the Secretary-General, giving particular attention to the work programme of the Commission on indicators of sustainable development, emphasizing the objectives, implementation, participation and outcome of the work programme as adopted by the Commission in 1995.

6. Overall, the Working Group agreed that information is a cross-cutting issue that is critical to implementing all dimensions of sustainable development. It helps to determine what we need to do, how we need to do it and how well we are doing it. Sustainable development requires integrated and informed decision-making at all levels.

Bridging the data gap

Indicators of sustainable development and their use

7. Many participants recognized the valuable role that a wide variety of national Governments, in particular the testing countries, have played in developing the work programme of the Commission on indicators of sustainable development. As a result of that work, a core set of 57 indicators of sustainable development has been identified, organized in a framework of themes and sub-themes. Many participants recognized the work as a valuable and flexible starting point to assist countries in developing national-level indicators of sustainable development. It was stressed, however, that further work by countries in this area should be voluntary in nature, should take into account the differences between countries, should be suited to country-specific conditions, and should not lead to conditionalities in the provision of aid and support to developing countries. Several delegations felt that further work on the basis of the experiences and results of the testing countries as well as other national and international experiences could help to increase understanding and acceptance of indicators as important tools for reducing the complexity of information on sustainable development and supporting national decision-making.

8. Some countries feel that further work on sustainable development indicators might include building basic information and statistical capacity in developing countries; identification of indicators for emerging problem areas, such as disaster

vulnerability; the identification of linkages among the different elements and intergenerational aspects of sustainable development, including means of implementation; and further work on issues of aggregation. The testing process was seen as a good basis for a broader intergovernmental process of enhancing the suitability and adaptability of indicators to the differing conditions of countries while recognizing the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

9. Other countries believe that indicators should be suited to country-specific conditions and should take into account the stage of development. They appreciated the efforts made in pilot testing of a set of indicators but emphasized that further technical examination and consideration at the intergovernmental level, with the full participation of all countries, is necessary. They further noted the role of the Statistical Commission in that regard.

10. It was noted by several countries that data collection and development of indicators may entail considerable costs relative to other urgent national priorities, and that support from developed countries is essential to improve data and information systems in developing countries.

Improved data collection and use

11. Many countries emphasized the need for improved coordination and harmonization of data collection and dissemination at the national and international levels to promote more efficient use of resources. Several delegations suggested that every effort should continue to be made to work towards convergence between the efforts of the Commission and other organizations and agencies, building on existing initiatives in this area.

Improving the availability of and access to information

Making information useful for decision-making

12. Many countries emphasized the continuing need for the development and deployment of information standards and to encourage the collection of information at the scale appropriate to the decision-making context.

Public access

13. Access to information and public participation were recognized as crucial elements for ensuring sound decision-making for sustainable development, as articulated in principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Real progress towards sustainable development requires public access to environmental information and the active involvement of major groups and the civil society at stages where it is possible to influence results.

14. Several delegations noted that a number of legally binding instruments already reflect elements of principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, and that various initiatives have been taken with regard to access to information in the framework of regional organizations. In that context, the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information adopted by countries in the European region was mentioned as an interesting model for enhancing public access to information, including public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, taking into account

the specific socio-economic and cultural conditions and requirements in the different regions.

15. The important role played by the public media in identifying emerging issues, raising awareness and promoting appropriate action towards sustainable development was mentioned, along with the importance of formulating an interactive information policy on the part of Governments.

16. The growing amount of information related to sustainable development generated by the private sector and the importance of its utilization in relevant decision-making, planning and monitoring processes was recognized. However, there was an expressed concern that the growing trend towards increased privatization and commercialization of information could potentially limit public access to information. Several delegations mentioned the need to find ways to balance the positive benefits of a market-driven system of information with the continuing need to ensure free and open public access to such information.

Financial support for information infrastructure and critical data-collection efforts

17. Several delegations highlighted the need to develop strategic partnerships between government agencies, civil society groups, multilateral organizations and the private sector to mobilize political and financial support for national information structures. Participants emphasized the need for strengthening assistance to developing countries and other countries that wish to enhance capacities and strengthen national programmes to improve both the data collection and dissemination.

New information technologies

18. It was generally agreed that the development of new information and communication technologies and the emergence of a new "knowledge economy" offer vast potential for more effective, wider and faster collection and dissemination of information, including for public participation. The Internet, in particular, can open up new opportunities, such as providing access to a wide range of previously inaccessible environmental databases. It also provides opportunities for reaching a broader audience, such as to people with disabilities.

19. A number of delegations, however, stressed the need to bridge the technology and information gap between developed and developing countries, as well as the challenge of meeting the information needs of currently excluded groups, such as the poor, women, rural communities, indigenous peoples and other geographically and socio-economically isolated groups. Many countries felt that unless decisive and collective action is taken to address the so-called "digital divide", the new technologies and information systems pose the threat of further marginalization for developing countries in general and specific groups within countries in particular.

Space-based and remote sensing technologies

20. Some delegations pointed out the essential importance of Earth observation, geographical information systems, video transmission technologies and Internet technologies for satellite data to obtain the information necessary for making policy and forecasts relating to the global environment. The international community

should therefore promote the development of such innovative technologies, based on user-friendly formats and styles to allow policy makers to make informed decisions.

B. International cooperation for an enabling environment

1. Possible elements for a draft decision by the Commission

21. The Working Group submits to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its ninth session possible elements for a draft decision on international cooperation for an enabling environment, as set out below.

Possible elements for a draft decision on international cooperation for an enabling environment

General considerations

1. A dynamic and enabling international economic environment supportive of international cooperation, particularly in the fields of finance, technology transfer, debt and trade, is needed in the pursuit of sustainable development. International cooperation also depends on an enabling national environment that promotes productive investment, both public and private, national and international, in sustainable development. Policies and governance measures conducive to achieving sustainable development are required at both the international and national levels.

2. There is a need to ensure a balance between economic growth, social development and environmental protection since these are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development.

3. The process of globalization is a critical element of the international economic environment and presents opportunities as well as challenges and risks for sustainable development. Globalization has, in principle, the potential to lead to economic convergence among countries. However, the recent period of rapid globalization has seen an increase in inequality among countries and to some extent within countries. This is due primarily to the fact that globalization has not been fully global. Answers must be found to the question of how to manage the global economy in the context of globalization so as to advance economic growth and sustainable development in all countries and spread the benefits of globalization more widely. Expanding international trade and investment, as well as strengthened partnerships between state and non-state actors, in particular the private sector, can contribute to sustainable development.

International cooperation

4. The Commission could emphasize the importance of international cooperation within the framework of Agenda 21 for promoting an enabling environment for sustainable development. Recognizing that sustainable development will require international cooperation and specific actions based on national circumstances, including assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in order to achieve sustainable

development, the Commission could recommend that the international community agree to:

(a) Reaffirm that the United Nations has a central role in promoting international cooperation for development and in promoting policy coherence on global development issues, including in the context of globalization and interdependence;

(b) Support developing countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable development in accordance with their national development programmes;

(c) Undertake all efforts to reverse the decline in official development assistance (ODA) flows to developing countries and to meet the agreed ODA target of 0.7 per cent of developed country gross national product (GNP) as soon as possible;

(d) Improve the coordination of ODA, based on recipient country priorities and strategies, to ensure an integrated approach to sustainable development;

(e) Explore ways in which ODA and private sector resource flows can play a complementary role;

(f) Support efforts to further reform and improve the multilateral financial institutions, including through improved mechanisms for meaningful participation and greater transparency in decision-making;

(g) Support the efforts of developing countries to manage capital and investment flows for the purpose of maintaining financial stability and achieving sustainable development objectives;

(h) Improve the functioning of the Global Environment Facility as a mechanism for financing global environmental aspects of sustainable development to make it more responsive to the needs and concerns of developing countries;

(i) Find lasting solutions to the debt problems of heavily indebted developing countries, including by using available mechanisms for debt reduction within the frameworks of the Paris Club and other relevant forums, and by supporting the full implementation of the enhanced heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative. In this regard, underline the need for the heavily indebted poor countries to take the policy measures necessary to become eligible for the initiative;

(j) Improve market access for products from developing countries and assist developing countries seeking integration into the world trading system, notably through the World Trade Organization (WTO), including through assistance in developing the institutional capacity and human resources to participate meaningfully in multilateral trade negotiations and to implement the agreements reached;

(k) Eliminate trade obstacles, including discriminatory trade practices, protectionist policies and non-tariff trade barriers, such as trade-distorting subsidies, that hinder the export of products to developed countries, particularly from developing countries;

(l) Promote efforts at the international and national levels to make development, trade and environment policies mutually supportive and supportive of sustainable development and poverty reduction;

(m) Encourage investment in developing countries, including through insurance mechanisms and financial instruments to reduce risk premiums;

(n) Develop innovative mechanisms for mobilizing financial resources, including new financial instruments and public-private partnerships;

(o) Enhance the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries and ensure that international assistance for technology transfer is demand-driven, pursuant to sustainable development objectives;

(p) Assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in capacity-building to support technology development and transfer, institutional strengthening and human resource development, including for development planning, financial regulation and infrastructure development, and in capacity-building for the mobilization and allocation of domestic and external financial resources, as called for, for example, in the Nairobi Initiative of the Fifth Expert Group Meeting on Finance for Sustainable Development;

(q) Support regional and subregional cooperation, including South-South cooperation, in promoting sustainable development.

Recommendations at the national level

5. At the national level, Governments, taking into account their national circumstances and priorities and with the support of the international community, as appropriate, are encouraged to:

(a) Create an enabling domestic environment for sustainable development through, inter alia, the rule of law, capacity-building, including institutional capacity-building, and the implementation of appropriate economic and social policies, so that domestic and international resources may be effectively mobilized and used for sustainable development;

(b) Formulate and implement national sustainable development programmes, through a national consultative process, as a useful tool in promoting an enabling environment;

(c) Improve opportunities for the private sector, NGOs and other major groups to contribute to sustainable development, economic planning and poverty eradication, including through the formulation and implementation of national sustainable development programmes;

(d) Develop and implement policies, programmes and incentives that integrate economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

2. Co-Chairpersons' summary of the discussion

Introduction

22. The Working Group also addressed the issue of international cooperation for an enabling environment, in accordance with General Assembly resolution S-19/2 on the Programme of Work for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.

23. The discussion on this topic was based on the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation for an enabling environment for sustainable development (E/CN.17/2001/5).

24. It was generally agreed that it is important for countries to establish an enabling environment at both the international and domestic levels in order to promote sustainable development, including economic growth, social development and environmental protection. Efforts to establish an international enabling environment should be conducted in a spirit of partnership between developed and developing countries based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and taking into account the specific conditions of individual countries, in accordance with the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21.

25. Some delegations stated that addressing the issue of international cooperation for an enabling environment is timely in view of related intergovernmental meetings and United Nations processes, particularly the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (to be held in May 2001) and the International Conference on Financing for Development (to be held in 2002). They felt that those meetings and processes provide the Commission with an opportunity to contribute to other intergovernmental discussions and to improve the reach and effectiveness of international cooperation by emphasizing the interaction between the three pillars of sustainable development — economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

Globalization and sustainable development

26. It was noted that international cooperation for an enabling environment is taking place in the context of an increasingly globalized world. Some delegations considered that the increasing pace of economic and social integration have created opportunities to overcome poverty through trade liberalization and economic growth. Globalization is seen as creating a new impetus for international cooperation and policy dialogue to facilitate the transition to sustainable development. However, globalization is also seen as a challenge to the international community to ensure that the benefits of globalization are maximized and more evenly distributed and that its risks and negative effects, including social and environmental impacts, are minimized.

27. Many delegations stated that there was an increasing disillusionment with globalization, particularly in the developing world, and that globalization had begun to generate a backlash. Reasons for this disillusionment were seen as a lack of tangible benefits to developing countries from opening their economies; economic losses and social dislocation in many developing countries caused by rapid financial and trade liberalization; increasing inequalities of wealth and opportunities arising from globalization; and the exacerbation of the global environmental situation. Some delegations considered that further marginalization and increased polarization of wealth and poverty were also negative consequences of globalization.

28. Many delegations stated that globalization was an uneven process. It was noted that trade and investment, two major aspects of economic globalization, are concentrated in only a few countries of the developing world, even though all countries are affected, to varying degrees, by the globalization process. Similarly, in the area of information and communication technology, an important catalyst for globalization, the digital divide was seen as adding to the unevenness of this

process. Some delegations stated that in the absence of fair global rules, globalization had increased the ability of the rich to advance their interests to the detriment of the poor, especially in the areas of trade, finance and technology. It was noted that there was nothing inherent in globalization that automatically reduced poverty and inequality. Some delegations said that special emphasis should be placed on poverty eradication.

29. Many delegations stated that a supportive external economic environment is crucial to achieving sustainable development goals. They saw a need for a commitment by Governments, the private sector and other segments of civil society to ensure the effective integration of all countries, particularly the developing countries, into the global economy. Some delegations stated that that would require the recognition of global interdependence with respect to production and demand, the environmental base that sustains the planet, a global financial architecture that rewards good socio-economic management, and global governance that promotes partnership among all nations and peoples.

30. Some delegations stated that there is a need for improved governance at the international level. They considered that agreed goals and targets need to be met, consistency among international institutions needs to be enhanced and holistic approaches, in addition to being endorsed, need to be better applied and implemented. It was stated that current levels of capacity-building and technology transfer are not adequate and that there is a need for an increase in North-South solidarity.

31. Many delegations stated that the decline in ODA flows to developing countries should be reversed and that the United Nations ODA target of 0.7 per cent of GNP of each developed country should be met within an agreed time period.

32. Some developed country delegations stated that they remain fully committed to development cooperation, including attaining the ODA target of 0.7 per cent of GNP as soon as possible. They also stated that a central priority for their countries continues to be further improvement in coordination of all ODA, based on recipient country priorities, so as to ensure an integrated approach to sustainable development. They further noted that the integrated and coordinated follow-up of the series of United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s is of particular importance in this context, and that the international development targets provide a useful framework to that end. It was also suggested that the United Nations ODA target of 0.7 per cent be increased to 1.0 per cent of GNP of donor countries.

33. Some delegations stated that ODA could play a catalytic and complementary role in relation to private sector resource flows in achieving development objectives, including by assisting developing countries in strengthening their civil, political, economic and financial institutions. Other delegations considered that private sector resource flows should complement ODA. Attention was also drawn to the many innovative mechanisms and instruments that have evolved over the past decade for mobilizing new or previously inaccessible private sector financial resources, and to the important role of these innovative mechanisms and instruments in financing sustainable development. It was stated that the Global Environment Facility has been a successful experiment in channelling new financial assistance to environmental projects, which, with appropriate reform, would become an increasingly valuable tool for sustainable development. Other delegations stressed the importance of improving the work of GEF.

34. Some delegations noted that international development cooperation increasingly includes a number of areas that were previously treated in isolation, particularly trade, environment and development, which raises a challenge for the international community to seek out and ensure policy coherence across traditionally separate disciplines.

35. Some delegations stated that there is a need for aid coordination since there is still substantial scope for eliminating unnecessary duplication between different bilateral as well as multilateral development institutions, and for a harmonizing of procedures among the donor community. Other delegations considered that all international development assistance should be coordinated with and disbursed through national Governments of recipient countries in accordance with their national development priorities.

36. It was stated that development assistance tends to flow to countries where assistance is used more effectively, and that effective use depends upon commitment to and action on participation and transparency by national Governments. It was stated that the international community has a key role to play in working with developing countries on capacity-building.

37. Many delegations noted the steady trend in liberalization of foreign direct investment (FDI). It was noted, however, that while net FDI flows to developing countries grew steadily through the 1990s, FDI flows to developing countries remain highly concentrated. Moreover, it was noted that portfolio investment flows and bank flows have shown great volatility, and that that volatility was an obstacle to sustainable development in developing countries.

38. Some countries noted that the current debt levels of the HIPC countries are unsustainable. Many delegations stated that debt reduction should be accelerated for heavily indebted poor countries, in conjunction with effective poverty eradication programmes, and that the enhanced HIPC initiative should be funded through new and additional resources and implemented as soon as possible. It was also suggested that there be a total cancellation of the external debt of HIPC countries.

39. Many delegations noted that debt also presents a major problem for some middle-income countries, and that those countries also need assistance in finding a lasting solution to their debt problems.

40. Some delegations emphasized that the economic growth and increased trade opportunities provided by trade liberalization are essential for the creation of an enabling environment to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. Improved market access and a strengthened multilateral trading system were seen as key elements for achieving economic development. Developed country Governments were encouraged to reduce trade barriers to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. Some delegations noted the "Everything but arms" initiative of the European Union on duty- and quota-free access for exports from the least developed countries.

41. It was noted that international development cooperation has a decisive role to play in enhancing the trade competitiveness of developing countries through the development, transfer and assimilation of technology; promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises; strengthening of financial systems; development of highly qualified human resources; and improvement of public school systems, especially in the areas of formal and non-formal vocational training.

42. Some delegations stated that Governments have a key role to play in adopting strong and effective environmental and social policies and integrating environmental and social concerns in their economic policies. They stated that WTO should be more responsive to sustainability concerns. Some delegations stated that a new round of multilateral trade negotiations should be launched in accordance with the objectives of sustainable development. However, it was also noted that the previously agreed upon trade round has not been fully implemented. It was stated that the global community should address trade, environment and development in a comprehensive way, and there should be a strengthening of coordination on these three areas at the national level.

43. Some delegations stated that trade obstacles should be removed with a view to contributing to a more efficient use of natural resources in both economic and environmental terms. Some delegations considered that the issue of subsidies should be addressed with a view to eliminating effects of subsidies that are both trade distorting and environmentally harmful. They felt that, in many cases, agricultural and energy subsidies and market access restrictions have promoted farming practices harmful to the environment.

44. Some delegations stressed that environmental standards should not become trade barriers to the products of developing countries.

45. Many delegations emphasized that despite the expansion of international trade at almost twice the pace of total economic activity, the problem of marginalization is being exacerbated by the globalization process. They considered that the increased emphasis on the role of trade in development make trade and the multilateral trading system a critical element of the enabling environment for sustainable development. The multilateral trading system was seen as being still far from a truly global system. Many delegations considered that market access for products from developing countries as well as integration of developing countries into the world trade system, notably through the World Trade Organization, are two major challenges to making the benefits of globalization available to all developing countries.

46. Some delegations stressed the importance of a favourable and enabling domestic environment supportive of sustainable development, stating that it is every country's own responsibility to create an enabling domestic environment. Elements of such an environment were considered to include sound macroeconomic policies, accountable and transparent governance, a sound domestic legal and regulatory framework, incentives for investment, the involvement of civil society in public decision-making and the strengthening of civil, political, economic and financial institutions. It was felt that such a domestic enabling environment would attract and retain the enormous international and domestic private sources of support for sustainable development which overwhelm any potential flows of ODA. It was also emphasized that promoting domestic capacity-building is a fundamental responsibility of all countries.

47. Some delegations stated that the adoption and implementation of national sustainable development strategies could serve as a useful tool in promoting a domestic enabling environment. It was stated that international cooperation should facilitate the formulation and elaboration of such strategies in developing countries by playing a catalytic role in governance, capacity-building and national processes of integration, consultation and participation. It was also stated that a country's

strategy could build on and be linked to mainstream economic, social and environmental plans, including frameworks for donor coordination.

48. Some delegations noted that the private sector played an important role in promoting the development and transfer of cleaner technology. Some delegations considered the promotion of cleaner production in developing countries and the contribution of national cleaner production centres to be an issue of particular relevance in the context of international cooperation. It was also stated that the current level of technology transfer is not sufficient.

49. It was stated that the United Nations initiative on national cleaner technology strategies could produce manuals and guidelines for use by developing countries and economies in transition in developing their own national technology strategies, taking into account their specific conditions.

50. Some delegations supported efforts to enhance government dialogue with the private sector on its responsibility to contribute to sustainable development, including the global compact. Other delegations were concerned that the global compact has not been reviewed by an intergovernmental process.

51. Some delegations indicated that major groups, as recognized in Agenda 21, have played central roles in promoting an enabling environment for sustainable development. They considered that international civil society networks could contribute to monitoring government and private sector action, as well as to promoting partnerships among all stakeholders. They considered that the environment should also be conducive to the empowerment of women, their active participation in decision-making and their full integration into sustainable development activities.

II. Other matters

52. No matters were discussed by the Working Group under this agenda item.

III. Adoption of the report of the Working Group

53. At its 6th meeting, on 16 March 2001, the Working Group had before it its draft report (E/CN.17/ISWG.II/2001/L.1) as well as informal papers.

54. At the same meeting, the Working Group took note of the informal papers and adopted its report.

IV. Organizational and other matters

A. Opening and duration of the session

55. The Inter-sessional Ad Hoc Working Group on Information for Decision-making and Participation and on International Cooperation for an Enabling Environment of the Commission on Sustainable Development met in New York from 12 to 16 March 2001, in accordance with Economic and Social Council

decision 1999/280 of 29 July 1999. The Working Group held 6 meetings (1st-6th) and a number of informal meetings.

56. The session was opened by the Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development, Bedřich Moldan (Czech Republic).

57. At the 1st meeting, on 12 March, the Chief of the Policy Integration and Programme Coordination Branch, Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, made a presentation.

58. At the same meeting, the representative of Canada made a presentation on the outcome of the International Expert Meeting on Information for Decision-making and Participation held in Aylmer, Quebec, from 25 to 28 September 2000.

59. At the 3rd meeting, on 13 March, the Director of the Division for Sustainable Development made a statement.

B. Election of officers

60. At its 1st meeting, on 12 March, the Working Group elected Alison Drayton (Guyana) and Madina Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan) as Co-Chairpersons by acclamation.

C. Agenda and organization of work

61. At its 1st meeting, on 12 March, the Working Group adopted its provisional agenda and approved its organization of work, as contained in document E/CN.17/ISWG.II/2001/1. The agenda was as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Information for decision-making and participation.
4. International cooperation for an enabling environment.
5. Other matters.
6. Adoption of the report of the Working Group.

D. Attendance

62. The session was attended by representatives of 36 States members of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Observers for other States Members of the United Nations and for the European Community, and representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and secretariats of treaty bodies as well as observers for intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations also attended.

E. Documentation

63. The Working Group had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on information for decision-making and participation (E/CN.17/2001/4);

(b) Addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on information for decision-making and participation: Commission on Sustainable Development work programme on indicators of sustainable development (E/CN.17/2001/4/Add.1);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation for an enabling environment for sustainable development (E/CN.17/2001/5);

(d) Letter dated 17 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the report of an international expert meeting on information for decision-making and participation, held in Aylmer, Canada, from 25 to 28 September 2000 (E/CN.17/2001/8);

(e) Background paper on the report of an international expert meeting on information for decision-making and participation;

(f) Background paper on the aggregation of indicators for sustainable development;

(g) Background paper on indicators of sustainable development: framework and methodologies;

(h) Background paper on information for decision-making: promoting environmental management accounting through government policies and programmes and advancing information for decision-making through electronic networking and corporate reporting;

(i) Background paper on information for decision-making: status report on the indicators of consumption and production patterns.

Annex

List of participants

States members of the Commission on Sustainable Development

Algeria:	Abdallah Baali, M. Ali Redjel, M. Boumediene Mahi
Angola:	
Australia:	Mark Hyman, Kathleen Mackie, Robert Alderson, Patricia Kaye, Howard Allen, Clare Walsh, Guy O'Brien
Belarus:	Sergei Ling, Uladzimir Vantsevich, Igor Kachanovsky, Andrei Popov
Belgium:	Nadine Gouzée, Günther Sleeuwagen, Ulrich Lenaerts, Jean-Paul Charlier
Bolivia:	
Brazil:	Maria Luisa Escorel de Moraes
Cameroon:	
China:	Sun Zhen, Liu Deshun, Zhang Megheng, Zhang Xiaoan, Chen Zhenlin, Shi Weiqiang, Wang Ling
Colombia:	Alfonso Valdivieso, Andrea Alban, Maria Cristina Cardenas, Mauricio Baquero
Côte d'Ivoire:	
Cuba:	Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Rafael Dausá Céspedes, Ileidis Valiente L. Diaz, Teresita Borges, Mercedes Mostelier, Antonio Villasol, Pedro Abella, Hilda Ortiz Garcia
Czech Republic:	Jan Kára, Jiří Bendl, Dagmar Sucharovova
Democratic People's Republic of Korea:	Sin Song Chol, Rim Song Chol
Democratic Republic of the Congo:	
Denmark:	Torben Mailand Christensen, Peter Gebert, Thure Christiansen, Niels P. Heltberg, Jens Erik Bendix Rasmussen, Annette Samuelsen, Sune Schou
France:	Raymond Quereilhac, Genevieve Verbrugge, Daniel Le Gargasson, Laurence Vuillaume
Germany:	Gila Altmann, Martin Lutz, Stephan Contius, Reinhard Krapp, Gert Kemper, Kristina Steenbock, Karl-Heinz Wittek, Rene Schaarschmidt, Peter Christmann, Uwe Taeger, Jessica Suplie, Hedwig Verron
Greece:	Elias Gounaris, Alexios-Marios Lyberopoulos, Andreas Kambitsis

Guatemala:	Gert Rosenthal, Silvia Corado
Guyana:	Alison Drayton, George Talbot
Hungary:	Zita Geller, Sandor Mozes
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Bagher Asadi, Mohammad Reza Salamat, Hussein Moeeni, Mohsen Esperi
Italy:	Sergio Vento, Massimo Macchia, Pier Benedetto Francese, Corrado Clini, Giovanni Brauzzi, Fabio Cassese, Francesco La Camera, Valeria Rizzo, Massimo Martinelli, Gloria Visconti, Antonio Strambaci Scarcia, Patrizia Esposito
Japan:	Koichiro Seki, Masatoshi Sato, Jyotaro Horiuchi, Kazuo Yagi, Kazuhiko Kokubu, Shunichi Nakada, Toru Nagayama, Ko Koiso, Kotaro Kawamata, Toshiyuki Matsui, Kuniko Uchida, Naomasa Murakoshi
Kazakhstan:	Madina B. Jarbussynova
Lebanon:	
Madagascar:	
Mali:	
Mauritania:	
Mauritius:	
Mexico:	Mauricio Escanero, Jose Ramon Lorenzo, Arturo Ponce
Mozambique:	Carlos dos Santos, Nuno Tomás, Fernando Juliao
Netherlands:	Pieter Verbeek, Vincent van den Bergen, Ralph Brieskorn, Gerard Snel, Alexandra Valkenburg, Wim C. Turkenburg
New Zealand:	Don Mackay, Trevor Hughes, Grant Robertson, Danny Burkhard
Nicaragua:	
Pakistan:	Shamshad Ahmad, Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Imrain Ahmad Siddiqui
Paraguay:	
Peru:	
Philippines:	
Poland:	Andrzej Dworzak, Izabela Kurdusiewicz
Portugal:	Nuno Brito, Joao Pedro Fins-do-Lago, Cristina West, Susana Teixeira de Sampayo, Isabel Mertens, Isabel Raposo, Patricia Gaspar

Republic of Korea:	Lee Ho-jin, Choi Seok-young, Yoon Jong-soo, Chung Bok-young, Oh Hyun-joo, Lee Kyung-chul, Han Jin-hyun, Kim Sang-do, Jeong Young-dae
Russian Federation:	Yuri N. Isakov, Elena E. Grigoreva, Oleg Y. Kobyakov, Dmitriy I. Maksimitchev, Sergei F. Bulgatchenko
Spain:	Inocencio F. Arias, Juan Luis Flores, Jose Luis Rosello, Angel Aparicio, Carlos Lopez
Sri Lanka:	
Sudan:	Mubarak Rahmtalla, Ilham Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed, Anas Eltayeb Elgailani Mustafa
Thailand:	Kulkumut Singhara Na Ayudhaya, Suvat Poopatanapong
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:	Naste Calovski, Donka Gligorova, Goran Stevcevski
Tunisia:	
Uganda:	Daudi Taliwaku
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:	
United States of America:	Jonathan Margolis, Franklin Moore, David Moses, Adela Backiel, Ko Barrett, David Berry, Thomas Brennan, Ann Carey, Roger Conway, John Davison, Mark G. Hambley, Lisa Hanle, John Kavanagh, Melissa Kehoe, Daniel Magraw, Duncan Marsh, John Matuszak, Patrick Mendis, Alfreda Meyers, Camille Mittelholtz, Marina Morgenegg, Daniel Rochberg, Arthur Rypinski, Cynthia Saddy, Claudia Serwer, Ann Stewart, David Van Hoogstraten

States Members of the United Nations represented by observers

Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, Indonesia, Lesotho, Malta, Morocco, Norway, Panama, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sweden, Tonga, Turkey, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela

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Entities represented by observers

European Community

Intergovernmental organizations

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Non-governmental organizations

Global Education Associates
International Chamber of Commerce
International Council of Environmental Law
International Indian Treaty Council
World Circle of the Consensus

Non-member States maintaining permanent observer missions at Headquarters

Switzerland

Specialized agencies and related organizations

United Nations Industrial Development Organization
World Intellectual Property Organization

United Nations and related programmes

Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Economic Commission for Europe
United Nations Development Programme
United Nations Environmental Programme